



# Sylamore Splash

USDA Forest Service



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## January Ice Storm Decimates Sylamore District

The last week of January brought a devastating ice storm to the northern tier of Arkansas and across the southeast.

Trees and power lines were coated with an inch of ice, and this heavy load brought trees, power poles, branches, and electric lines crashing to the ground.

While areas closer to the bottoms of the valleys were spared, the higher elevations were not so lucky. The destruction has to be seen to be believed. Trees lie on the ground or have the tops broken out of them. Roadsides are littered with branches and pieces of tree trunks.

The first job for District personnel was to get to people and domestic animals living within the forest boundary. Saw crews were brought in to assist with the huge job. Nearly every road on the Sylamore District had to be cut open. Recreation areas and buildings had to be checked for any damage. Lastly, trails needed to be cleared, and this is still ongoing.

The North Sylamore Hiking Trail fared pretty well during the storm, because much of it lies in the bottoms. Its higher areas were cleared in time for the annual Sylamore 50 K Run. Although the North Sylamore Hiking Trail is open, the North Sylamore extension is still closed, as are the Syllamo Bike Trail and the Ozark Highland Trail on the District.

But hikers are still advised to keep their eyes open for any broken limbs and branches overhanging the trails. These are called "widowmakers" for a very good reason!



Above: Bear Road after ice storm.

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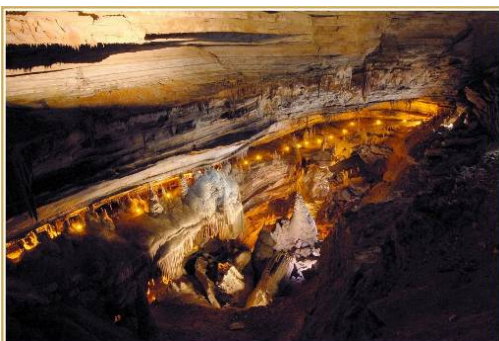
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### Special points of interest:

- If you're coming to the Caverns or the Sylamore District in the winter months, it's a good idea to call ahead and check on weather conditions.
- Sylamore Ranger District, 1001 East Main Street, Mountain View AR 72560; 870-269-3228
- Blanchard Springs Caverns, toll-free 1-888-757-2246; locally 870-757-2211; e-mail r8.ozark.bsc@fs.fed.us

## Discovery Trail Named National Recreation Trail

Liz Agpaoa, Regional Forester, designated the Discovery Trail at Blanchard Springs Caverns as a National Recreation Trail on February 24, 2009. The Dripstone Trail in the upper level of the Caverns has already been designated a National Recreation Trail



Normally a trail with controlled access and limited availability would not meet the criteria for National Trail designation. But because the Discovery Trail offers visitors an outstanding recreation opportunity and incorporates significant natural and cultural features, it was

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## 2009 is the International Year of Astronomy

Many people don't get to see the night sky because of competition from street and house lights, called "light pollution". In the year 2009, the world will celebrate the International Year of Astronomy as it commemorates the 400th anniversary of Galileo's use of a telescope to study the skies, and



Kepler's publication of *Astronomia Nova*.

In your national forests, parks, and state parks, there is usually an opportunity to get out and see the stars, minus all the lights. Some state and national parks offer sky programs, as do some observatories and museums. At Blanchard Springs Caverns, there is a star program offered at least once during the summer.

2009 is also the anniversary of many other historic events in science, including Huygen's 1659 pub-

lication of *Systema Saturnium*. This will be modern astronomy's quadricentennial, and the 2009 Year of Astronomy will be an international celebration of numerous astronomical and scientific milestones.

There are many Internet sites with good night sky information; locally, the Arkansas-Oklahoma Astronomical Society website ([www.aoas.org](http://www.aoas.org)) offers articles on backyard astronomy and telescopes. If you're going camping, take the opportunity to look away from the campfire, sit back, and search for the Big Dipper.

## Bike Trail Non-Winner for Henry Awards



For the second time, the Syllamo Bike Trail failed to win a Henry Award from the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism.

The Henry Awards are named for explorer Henri de Tonti, and are presented each year at the Governor's Conference on Tourism. The awards highlight a place, program, or person in the tourism industry

for a special achievement in one of several categories. The bike trail was nominated for the Natural State Award, which went to the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute.

Two local nominees did receive Henry Awards. The "Off the Beaten Path" Studio Tour in Stone County took the Community Tourism Development Award, and the town of Calico Rock received the Bootstrap Award.

The bike trail and the Ozark Highlands Trail Extension are still cov-

The Henry Awards are named for explorer Henri de Tonti.

ered with trees from January's ice storm. Work is going on to clear the bike trail, but with many downed trees and limbs, it will be a few weeks before it's all clear to ride.

It's always an honor to be nominated for an award, even if the nominee doesn't win. As for the Henry Award, remember the old sports cry — "Wait til next year!"

(Related story page one)

## Space Available for Blanchard Photo Tours

Blanchard Springs Caverns has offered Photography Tours on the Dripstone Trail for many years. 2004 marked the first photo tour on the Discovery Trail. The next photo tour date for the **Dripstone Trail** is Sunday, April 26. For the **Discovery Trail**, the date is Saturday, May 16.

All photo tours begin at the Caverns' Visitor Center at noon. Photo tours provide time but not instruction for cave photography. Partici-

pants may bring tripods and other photo equipment. Because the tours are four hours long, the photographers have plenty of time to get some good shots of the beauties underground. Photographers may



want to bring a light jacket because of the 58° temperature. But since the visitors are moving around, they are advised not to over-dress.

**DRIPSTONE PHOTO TOUR:**

**SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2009**

**DISCOVERY PHOTO TOUR:**

**SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2009**

All photo tours are limited to ten people each. Reservations and advance payment are required. Photo tours are \$20 per person; no other discounts apply. For more information or to sign up for the tours, please call the Caverns at **1-888-757-2246** or **870-757-2211**.

## 47th Annual Arkansas Folk Festival Coming Up!



It's time once again for the Arkansas Folk Festival in Mountain View. The theme for this year's festival is "Mountain View History as seen through the eyes of Grandma and Grandpa".

Originating with the Folkways Festival held in 1941 at Blanchard Springs, the festival has been held continuously since 1963 on the third weekend of April, marking the beginning of the 'season' in Mountain View. The 2009 festival runs from April 17—19. Thousands of visitors and residents reserve this weekend to renew a kinship with tradition and family.

This year's festival will feature the Artisans Market on the Square, which made its debut last year. The Artisans Market is a juried show offering handmade traditional and contemporary crafts, fine art and folk art. The Market will start



*Carved stoneware bowl by David Dahlstedt*

at noon on Friday and continue Saturday and Sunday. Artisans from the Mountain View Art Guild, the Ozark Folk Fiber Guild, the Off the Beaten Path Studio Tour, the Ozark Folk Center and the Arkansas Craft Guild will be joined by other exceptional artisans to fill the

square with a variety of unique hand made items. A pedestrian-only mall will be designated around the historic courthouse square, allowing visitors to mingle among artisans' booths while listening to music. Scheduled music programs will be presented on the outdoor stage at the courthouse on Friday and Saturday, with a gospel show on Sunday. Impromptu music groups will spring up around the area throughout the day and play into the evening hours. Visitors are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and stay for the duration.



*Handmade rocking chair by Owen Rein*

A highlight of the festival is the parade on Saturday morning beginning at 10 a.m. With floats sponsored by local organizations and businesses, dignitaries, the school's marching band, antique cars and horses, the parade offers something

for everyone as it winds its way down Main Street.

Other Festival events include a Dog-Gon Dog Show on Thursday at 5 p.m., and the Folk Festival Talent Show on Friday at 5 p.m. The Stone County Saddle Club will sponsor rodeos at 2 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday at the fairgrounds. The Ozark Folk Center state park kicks off its season offering free admission to the craft grounds Friday through Sunday, and free shuttle rides will be offered between the park and downtown both Friday and Saturday. Visitors may park at the Folk Center to avoid the congestion around the square

Local music shows also kick off the season this weekend, offering an exciting variety of music, comedy, and family entertainment.

Other activities available in the area include tours of Blanchard Springs Caverns, mountain biking, camping and hiking in the Ozark National Forest, and fishing on White River.



*Wood-fired pottery vase by Joe Bruhin*

The Arkansas Folk Festival is sponsored by the Mountain View Area Chamber of Commerce. To contact the Chamber of Commerce about the festival or other local events, call 1-888-679-2859 or visit [www.arkansasfolkfestival.com](http://www.arkansasfolkfestival.com).



## USDA Forest Service

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Caring for the Land and Serving  
People



The USDA Forest Service is a Federal agency that manages public lands in national forests and grasslands. The Forest Service is also the largest forestry research organization in the world, and provides technical and financial assistance to state and private forestry agencies. Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the Forest Service, summed up the purpose of the Forest Service—"to provide the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run."

National forests are America's great outdoors. They encompass 193 million acres (about 78 million hectares) of land, which is an area equivalent to the size of Texas. National forests provide opportunities for recreation in open spaces and natural environments.

The job of Forest Service managers is to help people share and enjoy the forest, while conserving the environment for generations yet to come.

## National Recreation Trail (continued)

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deemed worthy of the special designation. The unique nature of the cave itself, and the need to provide for visitor safety as well as flora and fauna protection sets the Discovery Trail apart from other national trails.

That "limited availability" means the Discovery Trail is not open all the time, as the Dripstone Trail is. Because of endangered species of bats, tours in the Discovery level are limited to the summer months, when the bats are active—and usually in some other cave on the District.

The Discovery Trail is more strenuous than the Dripstone; with nearly 700 stairs it's not for everyone. On this trail visitors walk next to the underground stream and stand be-

neath the 100-foot-deep Natural Entrance, where every visitor used to drop in, and climb back out.

### Another change

In addition to the newly designated Trail, another change at Blanchard is the revamping of the theater system. "It will be an HD system with surround sound speakers," says Caverns Administrator Bob Reeves. "So the picture will be brighter and crisper, and the sound will be clearer." The introductory photos of the old movie will be replaced with area photos taken by local photographers, and the background music is from a local musician, Joe Jewell.

So the next time you come to the Caverns, you can see the changes in the movie for yourself. If your visit is in the summer you also have the chance to tour the officially desig-

nated "Blanchard Springs Caverns Discovery National Recreation Trail"!



### Blanchard Caverns Schedule

April 1—Oct. 31 — Dripstone Trail, Wild Cave Tour open seven days a week

April 26 — Dripstone Photo Tour

May 16 — Discovery Photo Tour

May 23—Sept. 7 — Discovery Trail open seven days a week

May 23—Sept 5 — Summer programs begin at Blanchard

